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The phenomenon of resistance to change takes several forms. When and whether it should be challenged or encouraged is discussed here. As anticipation of change from customary habits expectably produces anxiety, resistance is mainly protective. The learner may reveal his resistance to or rejection of a new idea by ignorance, doubt, or merely a feeling of inadequacy to deal with it. The initial expression is "arousal" behavior, a form of attention; when it reaches active resistance, it is regarded as a prerequisite to further learning. Otherwise, if the teacher challenges or dismisses this rejection, the desired learning of the new concept will likely be blocked. If however, the teacher shows that the objections are reasonable, understandable, and doubtless shared by others, the learner becomes receptive to persuasion, accepts the new idea, and acquires a broader outlook. The teacher must decide when or whether to increase the pressure for change, encourage further expression of objection, or remove the pressure. Resistance should be expected, accepted, even welcomed as a significant step in the learner's growth. Unless the forces operating against the change are exposed and examined, they may remain to undermine acceptance of new concepts, whereas, if the learner is encouraged to resist openly, he is more likely to become receptive to change. The author lists seven relevant questions on which further research is needed. (HH)

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RESISTANCE: A PRECONDITION FOR CHANGE

by

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Introduction. In the field of education a well known phenomenon is resistance on the part of the students who are about to be changed. For example, in a recent study by the author (Johnson, 1968) teachers in training were asked to observe a videotape of classroom scenes and identify or describe the specific behavior of the students on the screen. One group of teachers was instructed to write their thoughts after each scene. Content analysis of their responses later indicated that they were not focusing upon pupil behavior at all. A majority of teachers, in spite of instructions to the contrary, were focusing on teacher rather than pupil behavior and judging or evaluating rather than describing. Only twenty percent did what they were asked to do.

Resistance to change may manifest itself in a variety of forms, ranging from student apathy, boredom and inattention on one hand, to tension, conflict or overt hostility on the other. Tyler (1967) asks the following question:

> "In teaching, might there be any evidences of resistance? Certainly there are apparent analogies between teaching and psychotherapy. The student wants to learn, but learning ways of thinking which conflict with presently held ways is painful, so the student resists. Disturbance of previous skills and habits creates anxiety. In a classroom this is also manifested by such behaviors as absences, withdrawal from class, tardiness, and silence in class."

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As Howsam (1968 states:

> "There is need to understand the function of resistance. Probably most who encounter resistance view it as obstructive and negative. Such a view often leads to reactive behavior which may increase the level of resistance. Resistance, like social conflict, may be a positive as well as a negative force in the process of change. Appreciation of its nature and its contribution among change planners can contribute much to the effectiveness of projects and programs."

It is the writer's purpose to explore resistance as a positive force or precondition for change which is not only necessary, but functional and logical as well.

To illustrate, consider the case of the teacher who is learning with improved instructional technology to become a programmer while he is also learning in a human relations course to become more authentic and spontaneous. Any teacher who is jarred at the notion that he must learn to be <u>both</u> programmatic and spontaneous <u>at the same time</u> would probably now be entering the path of resistance:

(1) He has already attended to an apparent paradox and is "aroused". How can he possibly "program" his classroom and be spontaneous at the same time?

(2) He is jarred or disturbed by this disconfirming idea and is in a state of up-endedness.

(3) He doesn't like some aspect of the notion. It is a discrepant idea which is inconsistent with his previous thinking.

(4) He is marshalling fights against it. He probably already has two or three good arguments ready to explain why a teacher could <u>not</u> possibly program and be spontaneous <u>at the same time</u>, and,

(5) He has now reached a point where change in his attitude is potentially possible. He has reached a cross-road or choice-point in his thinking, i.e., an existential crisis. Should he accept the new idea or deny it?

(6) If he accepts the apparent inconsistency, he has enlarged his outlook and embraced a new view of the world. He has changed.

The intention is to explore more fully this specific dynamic of resistance which has just been described.

Resistance is necessary. Resistance might be thought of as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for change. Without it, no change would be possible. Unless the person is in some sense moved from where he was a moment ago, no learning can be said to have taken place. The learner must be jolted from some cognitive and/or affective position in space-time and jostled into a new position. Resistance would appear to be an inevitable accompaniment to such dislocation.

Klein (1967) suggests that from the change agent's point of view resistance has the effect of blocking the change agent's objectives. However, from the learner's point of view, it is an attempt to maintain his integrity in the face of real threat. Far from being "irrational" it is reasonable to the person who is resisting. It is consistent and systematically interwoven within the frame of reference of the learner.

Resistance has been described as moving through a discernible pattern or cycle of five stages. These range from massive, undifferentiated opposition, through mobilization and stark opposition, towards eventual stabilization in which the one-time supporters of the change become the resisters to any emerging change (Watson, 1967).

Phenomenologically, the learner begins to resist the moment he is "hooked", "tuned in", and attending to that which he is resisting. According to Krathwohl's Taxonomy (1967), he is now at the very lowest or beginning level of affective change. He is barely attending to the communication and is aroused enough by it to murmur signs of irritation, disbelief or discontent.

As Berlyne (1966) has noted, the arousal stimulus itself involves a heightening of attentiveness that helps individuals to learn. The inner conflicts produced by such ambiguous, surprising or complex stimuli will in turn further help to arouse the individual.

Once the resistant learner senses this annoying inconsistency in his phenomenological world, he necessarily either ignores it or fights. In fact, the louder he yells, we might conclude the closer he is to the intended change. At some point he must either give up and let go of his opposition, i.e., accept the change....or he must "tune out" the change so completely, that no change occurs at all.

To the extent that a certain amount of resistance is necessary before change will occur, there may exist optimal levels of resistance within individuals and groups. Too little resistance to change may mean total inattention, apathy or lack of interest in the new idea. Too much resistance over prolonged periods of time may mean continued fighting, unresolved conflict, and eventual withdrawal from the new idea, ending in no change at all.

Resistance is functional. As suggested above, resistant behavior serves to defend existing values. It is a signal to the teacher that the student "hears" and perceives his view of the world being challenged. The learner's self-image, ideas about reality, attitudes or belief system have been up-ended. As Clark (1962) suggests, the learner's expectancies are not being met and he is confronted with a contradiction which must somehow be reconciled.

The learner's desire to make the world orderly again, in the face of such inconsistency, has in fact already influenced classroom procedures in the teaching of science. Inquiry training, for example is a procedure which deliberately confronts the learner at the start of every lesson with an up-ending or discrepant physical event. The student then attempts to explain the phenomenon and raise hypotheses as to why it might have happened (Suchman, 1966).

The resistant learner, however, is confronted with an annoying discrepant idea. He tends to explain it away by marshalling arguments and assumptions as to why this annoying idea could not possibly be true, logical,

feasible, healthy, ethical, legal, and so forth.

At some point, the learner then does more than exhibit attending, arousal and explaining behavior. He begins to fight for his preconceptions and beliefs. He tries not to be shaken, fights not to be jarred out of his world. Yet the harder he fights, the closer he is to change. He may eventually experience what Bugental (1965) would describe as an existential crisis wherein he must choose to hold on to his preconceptions or choose to turn loose of them and change. Both choices are risky, since he must give up something either way.

From the teacher's point of view the learner is about to "see the light". From the student's point of view, however, it may be the beginning of the end.

Resistance is growth or movement towards change. Contrary to the thinking of many teachers, resistance is to be expected, allowed, and even nurtured or attended to as as a significant step in the growth of the learner. This particular viewpoint would suggest that teachers accept wholeheartedly signs of resistance in their pupils rather than label these pupils as "discipline problems" or "obstructionists" as is often the case. Teachers would welcome signs of resistance, rather than squelch them.

To the extent that resistance functions to defend and protect against real or perceived threat, the learner is expressing fearful behavior when he opposes change. An application of Lewin's field theory (1951) would suggest it would be better to lessen this fear of change and not try to increase the forces or pressures for change, since the latter would merely serve to increase the threat.

In order to lessen the fear of the change, it is suggested that the teacher encourage, foster and listen carefully to the opposition, rather than squelch it. It would be better to deal with the resistance than to avoid it or bury it by changing the subject. Resistant feelings must be brought out

in the open as real and defensible, for as Heaton notes, feelings are facts and must be accepted as facts. The learner must be made aware of his own opposition and self-conscious of his own arguments. He must begin to realize that existing values <u>are</u> being threatened. Values at this point <u>are</u> being questioned and held up for re-examination.

Eicholz (1963) gives a framework for identifying forms of rejection in teachers which would apply to students as well (See Table I). It gives those interested in dealing with resistance some insights into possible strategies. The person who is uninformed, for example, should be approached differently than the one who is actually feeling anxious or alienated.

Consistent with this viewpoint, Zander (1950) urges the changer to help the changees:

> "...to develop their own understanding of the need for the change, and an explicit awareness of how they feel about it, and what can be done about those feelings."

It is believed that in this fashion resistance may be lessened and threat thereby reduced so that the learner will choose to make the change rather than not make it.

Stated differently, the desire of an individual to protect the status quo or defend his existing belief structure is as real as his self-image and personal integrity. He operates on the basis of a broad spectrum of data and conflicting forces in his immediate social milieu. Though these forces are often unknown or disregarded by the teacher, they serve as a brake or lever for the learner. Unless these forces are laid bare, examined openly and uncovered publicly, they may serve to undermine and destroy the efforts of the teacher.

To illustrate, in ten different basic encounter groups, the author, as an instructor or group trainer, invited the participants at the first

TABLE I

A FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTIFYING

FORMS OF REJECTION

Forms of Rejection	Causes of Rejection	State of the Subject	Anticipated Response
Ignorance	Lack of dissemination	Uninformed	"The information is not available."
Suspended judgement	Data not logically compelling	Doubtful	"I will wait and see how good it is before I try it."
Situational	Data not materially compelling	1. Comparing	"Other things are equally good."
		2. Defensive	"School regulations will not permit it."
		3. Deprived	"Costs too much to use in time and/or money."
Personal	Data not psychologically compelling	1. Anxious	"Don't know if I can operate equipment."
		2. Guilty	"Should use, but don't have time."
		3. Alienated	"These gadgets will never replace a teacher."
Experimental	Present or past trials	Unconvinced	"I tried them once and they aren't any good.

meeting to make themselves known to each other. Briefly, they were instructed "to share how they felt about themselves and each other in the room."

Table II shows clearly that each group resisted this topic and chose to talk about people and conditions not in the room at that moment. Given the wide variety of persons involved, it is especially interesting to note the nature of the content shifts in each group and the specific reasons given for not wanting to share how they felt about themselves and each other.

The list provides clear evidence of resistance that is self-protective, phenomenologically sound, and logically consistent. It is only after these fears are expressed that opportunities can be provided to test the notion and thereby dispel the fear, i.e., that expressing feelings amongst each is actually harmful or dangerous to one's job, position or image.

Each person is then allowed to openly resist and encouraged to publicly deal with the reasons for his resistance. Instead of being told that his objections are "silly" or "illogical" he is made to feel they are "reasonable", "understandable" and perhaps even shared by others. Once he exposes his resistant feelings he becomes accessible as a learner and potentially able to change his attitude.

Summary and Conclusions. Resistance behavior has been viewed as a necessary, functional and logical movement towards change. It begins to reveal itself as attending or arousal behavior on the part of the learner and once it manifests itself as resistant behavior, should be attended to by the teacher as though it were a prerequisite task to be accomplished prior to further learning. To the extent that resistant behavior is squelched, dismissed as "irrelevant" or "wasteful of teacher time," further movement may be blocked or prevented and the possibilities for the desired learnings are denied.

TABLE II

TOPICS SELECTED AND REASONS FOR AVOIDING
ASSIGNED TOPIC IN TEN BASIC ENCOUNTER GROUPS

	Background of Participants	N	Topics Selected	Reasons for Avoiding Assigned Topic
1.	Peace Corps students at State College	20	Peace Corps administrators, faculty, general living conditions	"We're being rated and we don't want to be deselected from the Peace Corps"
2.	Graduate students at University and State College	80	Faculty, college courses, schedule problems, exams	"Professors might grade us down or expel us from graduate program"
3.	Student Teachers in Urban City Schools	20	Training teachers, administrators, problem pupils, school system	"We might get thrown out of student teaching or penalized if we talk honestly about ourselves"
4.	Training Teachers in Urban City	10	Problem pupils, student teachers, administrators, school system	"Word might get back to principals and supervisors and we'd lose our jobs."
5.	Medical, Legal, Clerical, Business Executives in Rural Community	80	Clients, bosses, community conditions, politics	"We'd lose our clients if they knew how we really felt' or "We'd lose our position in community"
6.	Parents of Handicapped Children in Upper-class Community	15	Other parents, children of other parents, poor school system	"We're strangers. None of you would understand. I have unique problems. You'd think less of me if you knew."
7.	Divorced Parents in Non-Profit Social	150	Previous mates, their children, bosses,	"We see each other socially. Better not to get

Executives in Rural Community		[illegible]	lose our position in community"
6. Parents of Handicapped Children in Upper-class Community	15	Other parents, children of other parents, poor school system	"We're strangers. None of you would understand. I have unique problems. You'd think less of me if you knew."
7. Divorced Parents in Non-Profit Social Organization, Urban Chapter	150	Previous mates, their children, bosses, social events	"We see each other socially. Better not to get too intimate. Would ruin our chances for dating or finding a mate"
8. Psychiatrists and Medical Executives in Rural Medical Center	25	Patients, other doctors, nurses, secretarial help, clerical workers, client problems	"We have professional reputations to uphold. Would lose our patients if they knew us as we really were."
9. Professors and Faculty Administrators in Urban State Colleges	20	Deans, college system, faculty rights, committee problems, faculty decisions	"We all work together. Not good to be too honest. We risk promotion. Assistant professor can't tell associate professor and associate professor can't tell full professor the truth"
10. Ex-drug-addicts, Ex-convicts at Narcotics Rehabilitation Center and Prison Cells	50	Probation officers, social workers, guards, warden, rehabilitation center executives	"We'd never get out of here if we told the truth" or"We'd get busted and given lousiest jobs if they knew"

It is suggested that each learner may move through a unique pattern of resistance which is consistent with his phenomenological world. The cycle through which he moves may include:

(1) attending and arousal behavior
(2) disconfirming and up-ending feelings
(3) distaste for the discrepant or inconsistent idea
(4) marshalling of arguments and counter-attacking forces to explain or fight the discrepancy
(5) experiencing of a cross-road or choice-point: to accept the new idea or deny it?
(6) if the idea is accepted, an enlarged outlook.

It would appear that the teacher needs to determine where the learner or student group is in this cycle. This might help him determine whether or not to: (1) increase the pressure for change, (2) encourage the learner to explore his resistant feelings, or (3) back off and remove pressure for change.

Evidence was reported from ten different groups about resistant behavior that was self-protective and designed to preserve the integrity or value-systems of the persons being changed. Reasons given for the resistance were observed in these instances to be phenomenologically sound and logically consistent.

In conclusion, it has been suggested that resistance be expected, accepted, and even welcomed as a significant step in the growth of the learner. However, unless the social forces operating against the change are also laid bare and examined publicly, they may serve to undermine any change efforts. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the learner who is encouraged to openly resist and publicly expose the reasons for his resistance is more likely to become accessible later as a learner or as a target for change.

Need for research. In light of this discussion, research is needed to determine the answers to many questions. Among these are the following:

(1) Do teachers who confront resistance and deal with it in open discussion produce greater affective change in the learners?

(2) Do teachers who squelch or ignore resistant behavior impede or block further progress on the part of the learners?

(3) How much resistant behavior should the teacher foster to maximize change? What is the optimal level of resistance for producing learning in each person or group?

(4) Is the optimal level of resistance dependent upon variables such as leadership style, personality, size, purpose, composition or history of the group?

(5) Is there a decrease in overt resistant behavior when the reasons for such behavior are publicly shared and accepted?

(6) Do teachers who desire cognitive change achieve greater retention and transfer of learning when they publicly accept the student's resistant feelings that precede the change?

(7) Can teachers be taught to attend to resistant behavior in the classroom? Can they be taught: a) to delineate objectives concerning resistant behaviors, b) to design methods for accomplishing them, and c) to evaluate the results?

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